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CATHOLIC BISHOPS PLUNGE INTO POLITICS

The U.S. Catholic Bishops have been passing resolutions for years without media coverage. But because the liberals and pacifists saw a way to use the Bishops to help promote a Nuclear Freeze, reporters converged on Chicago to make the recent Bishops' meeting a major media event.

The Bishops' Letter is a political, not a religious, document. Draft Two was released last October in time to help the Nuclear Freeze referenda in the Nov. 2 elections. Draft Three was approved in time to assist a Nuclear Freeze resolution in Congress.

Bishops have the same constitutional rights as all other Americans to make political statements, to lobby for legislative or ballot issues, and to support the party or candidates of their choice. But individual Catholics are clearly not bound to believe any political statements made by a conference of Bishops.

Over the centuries, Catholic Bishops have often tried to exercise political power, usually with unfortunate results. In 1977, the Catholic Bishops endorsed the giveaway of our Panama Canal. That certainly was not a statement on religion or morality, but was a partisan political action NOT binding on Catholics. Many prominent Catholics in and out of Congress opposed the Canal giveaway.

In 1981, the Catholic Bishops allowed their Washington, D.C., bureaucracy (the USCC) to publish an amazing booklet titled "Education in Human Sexuality for Christians" which calls for coed classroom discussion of sexuality starting at age 6. It recommends teaching the child by age 12 about all aspects of sexual behavior including contraceptives and homosexuality, but it is strangely silent about the horrendous physical, psychological, and disease consequences of promiscuity.

Pope John Paul II, the most admired Pope of our lifetime, has clearly stated Catholic doctrine about war (which cannot be changed by the U.S. Bishops): (1) self-defense is a moral right of individuals and of nations, (2) a government has the moral duty to protect its nation against aggression, (3) we cannot endorse disarmament unless it is mutual, (4) the use of weapons can and must be proportionate to the threat.

As between the clear, universal statements of the Pope (repeated last year at the United Nations) and the confused, contradictory political statements of the Bishops, the overwhelming majority of Catholics will side with the Pope. His views were ably articulated at the Chicago meeting by Archbishop Philip M. Hannan of New Orleans.

During the Bishops' debate, Archbishop Hannan said that the United States would have lost World War II "if we had followed the recommendations in this document." During the Bishops' debate about weapons, he frankly told his peers that "You don't know what you're talking about." He knows what he is talking about; he was a paratrooper in World War II.

It appears that the real purpose of the whole charade was a partisan political attack on the Reagan Administration and an attempt to give respectability to freezenik (pro-abortion) Democratic politicians (such as Walter Mondale) in the 1984 elections. The Bishops' spokesman on ABC Nightline on May 3 admitted that their information came from McGeorge Bundy (John F. Kennedy's National Security Adviser) and from Paul Warnke (Jimmy Carter's SALT II negotiator).

The partisan political nature of the Bishops' statement is confirmed by the open letter of enthusiastic support issued by McGeorge Bundy, Paul Warnke, Jerome Wiesner (John F. Kennedy's science adviser), and Robert McNamara (Secretary of Defense in both the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations). If there is any ONE man who is responsible for the tragedy of the Vietnam War, that man is Robert McNamara; he once said that he would be proud to have it called "McNamara's war."

McNamara's advice plunged and kept our nation for years in a tragic, unnecessary war, and we certainly don't need any more of his advice now. And, contrary to what some extremist Catholic Bishops may be claiming, there is no "Catholic" position on the MX, Pershing II, ABM, or any freeze resolution, ballot issue or particular weapons strategy.

The Catholic Bishops Conference is apparently going down the same path traveled by the National Council of Churches, whose Fifth World Order Study Conference made news in 1958 by proclaiming that "we cannot support the concept of nuclear retaliation." The NCC did not sell its pacifist propaganda either to the U.S. Government or to its own members; it only suffered loss of credibility with its members who concluded that the NCC was forsaking its religious function to become a political lobby.